

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

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E.O. 11652: N/A

TAGS: CASC ET

SUBJECT: GHINDA HOSPITAL

REF: A. ASMARA 0211, B. ASMARA 0202

1. AS INDICATED REF B, REMAINING FOUR NON-ETHIOPIAN MEMBERS GHINDA HOSPITAL STAFF CLOSED HOSPITAL MARCH 3 AND CAME TO ASMARA MARCH . THE FOUR PERSONSL CONSIST OF TWO AMERICANS, THE REV. JOHN MASON AND MS. SANDRA CAMPBELL, A NURSE; AND TWO DUTCH NATIONALS, DR. GREET REITKER AND MS. CORRIE VAN GALEN, THE OTHER NURSE. MESSAGE FROM DR. REITKER FOR DUTCH AMBASS- ADOR PASSED TO EMBASSY ADDIS.

2. GEN. GETACHEW NADEW, MARTIAL LAW ADMINISTRATOR, CALLED ME ON FRIDAY AFTERNOON, MARCH 5, TO ASK WHAT WAS HAPPENING AT THE GHINDA HOSPITAL. HE INDICATED THAT HE KNEW THE STAFF WAS LEAVING AND WAS CONCERNED THAT INSURGENTS MIGHT COME AND ATTEMPT TO REMOVE THE DRUGS AND EQUIPMENT FROM THE HOSPITAL. HE SAID HE FELT THE ARMY SHOULD TAKE OVER THE HOSPITAL. GETACHEW TOLD ME THAT HE WOULD INSTRUCT THE BRIGADE COMMANDER IN DONGOLO TO PROVIDE PROTECTION FOR THE HOSPITAL. I TOLD GETACHEW THAT WE KNEW THE STAFF WAS COMING TO ASMARA, THAT IT WAS OUR ASSUMPTION THAT THEY WOULD HAVE LOCKED THE HOSPITAL, AND
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THAT IN ANY EVENT THEY WOULD BE IN TOUCH WITH THE CONGEN AS

SOON AS THEY ARRIVED. I TOLD GETACHEW I WOULD CALL HIM AS
SOON AS I HAD TALKED TO THE GHINDA HOSPITAL STAFF MEMBERS.

3. THE LATTER DID ARRIVE IN ASMARA LATE FRIDAY AFTERNOON,
MARCH 5, AND REV. MASON CAME TO THE CONSULATE ON SATURDAY
MORNING, MARCH 6. HE CONFIRMED THAT ALL HAD ARRIVED IN
ASMARA AND THAT THE HOSPITAL HAD BEEN LOCKED UP. HE ALSO SAID
THAT ALL DRUGS HAD BEEN PACKED UP UNDER THE SUPERVISION OF
DR. REITKER, AND BY MUTUAL AGREEMENT HAD BEEN TRANSPORTED
BY THE ARMY TO DONGOLO WHERE THEY WOULD BE HELD UNTIL THE
FUTURE OF THE HOSPITAL WAS DECIDED UPON. OTHER EQUIPMENT,
INCLUDING SOME 50 BEDS, OPERATING ROOM EQUIPMENT, ETC.
REMAINED AT THE HOSPITAL. I THEN CALLED GETACHEW AND
CONVEYED ALL OF THIS TO HIM, IN PARTICULAR THE FACT THAT
THE HOSPITAL'S DRUGS WERE NOW IN THE HANDS OF THE ARMY. I
PASSED ON TO HIM MASON'S STATEMENT THAT HE WAS GOING TO
GET IN TOUCH WITH HIS MISSION HEADQUARTERS IN PHILADELPHIA
OVER THE WEEKEND, AND SUGGESTED THAT GETACHEW DEFER FURTHER
ACTION UNTIL THE MISSION GROUP HAD DECIDED ON WHAT IT WISHED
TO DO. GETACHEW AGREED BUT SAID THAT HE WOULD LIKE TO MEET
THE GHINDA STAFF, AND AGREED TO AN APPOINTMENT AT 0900 MONDAY,
MARCH 8. HE AGREED TO MY BEING PRESENT AT THE MEETING.

4. ACCORDINGLY, THIS MORNING AT 0900 I ACCOMPANIED DR.
REITKER, REV. MASON, AND MS. CAMPBELL TO GETACHEW'S
OFFICE. MS. VAN GALEN DID NOT COME AS SHE IS ILL. THE
MEETING WAS CORRECT BUT SCARCELY WARM. WHEN ASKED WHY
THEY HAD CLOSED THE HOSPITAL, MASON INDICATED IT WAS
LARGELY BECAUSE OF THE DEPARTURE OF THE BULK OF THE LOCAL
STAFF. AT THIS, GETACHEW REQUESTED A LIST OF ALL LOCAL
EMPLOYEES, AND SPECIFICALLY OF THOSE WHO HAD LEFT. AFTER
SOME HESITATION MASON AND DR. REITKER AGREED THAT SUCH A
LIST COULD BE PROVIDED. I THEN OBSERVED THAT OBVIOUSLY LACK
OF SECURITY AND THE INCREASE IN VIOLENCE IN THE GHINDA AREA
WAS ANOTHER REASON THE STAFF HAD LEFT THE HOSPITAL.
REV. MASON PICKED THIS UP AND EXPANDED ON THE PROBLEMS
THEY FACED. SUBSEQUENT TO THE MEETING, MASON AND DR.
REITKER AGREED THAT IT WAS A MISTAKE TO HAVE MENTIONED THE
DEPARTURE OF LOCAL PERSONNEL, AND THEY FEEL THAT RETALIATORY
ACTION AGAINST THEM MAY BE TAKEN BY THE ETHIOPIAN MILITARY.
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LATER TODAY MASON TOLD ME THAT THEY ARE PREPARING A LIST OF
LOCAL EMPLOYEES BASED ON INFORMATION ALREADY PROVIDED THE MILITARY
AUTHORITIES IN GHINDA.

5. IN RESPONSE TO GETACHEW'S REQUEST FOR A STATEMENT AS TO THE
INTENTIONS OF THE GROUP. MASON INDICATED THAT JOHN GALBRAITH,
THE GENERAL SECRETARY OF THE ORTHODOX PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH IN
PHILADELPHIA, THE PARENT BODY OF THEIR GROUP, THE AMERICAN

EVANGELICAL MISSION, ON THE BASIS OF TELEPHONE DISCUSSION OVER THE WEEKEND, WOULD BE COMING TO ETHIOPIA THIS WEEK. I SUGGESTED TO GETACHEW, THAT INASMUCH AS THE DRUGS ARE IN THE ARMY'S HANDS AND AS THE LOCAL GHINDA STAFF CANNOT DECIDE ON THE FATE OF THE HOSPITAL, THAT MATTERS BE LEFT AS THEY STAND UNTIL GALBRAITH ARRIVES AND CONSULTS WITH THE MISSION MEMBERS. HE AGREED, ALTHOUGH IT IS QUITE CLEAR THAT HE WANTS THE MILITARY TO TAKE OVER THE HOSPITAL. GETACHEW INITIALLY WANTED GALBRAITH TO GO TO ADDIS AND GET CLEARANCE THERE TO TRAVEL TO ASMARA. I SUGGESTED THAT THIS WOULD BE TIME-CONSUMING AND WOULD RISK DELAYS WITH THE CLEARANCE PROCESS IN ADDIS. GETACHEW RELUCTANTLY AGREED THAT, ASSUMING GALBRAITH HAS AN ETHIOPIAN VISA, HE COULD PROBABLY BE PERMITTED TO LAND AT ASMARA. THIS EXCHANGE WAS SOMEWHAT SURPRISING IN VIEW OF THE FACT THE DISEMBARKATION AT ASMARA FROM EUROPEAN FLIGHTS HAS BEEN TAKING PLACE FOR SOME TIME AND AIRPORT VISAS ARE ISSUED FOR SHORT STAYS.

6. MASON AND THE OTHERS ARE ATTEMPTING TO GET IN TOUCH AGAIN BY TELEPHONE WITH GALBRAITH AND WILL ALSO BE SUBMITTING A MESSAGE TO BE FORWARDED TO HIM THROUGH STATE CHANNELS.
SHERRY

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